

Showcasing modeling strategies in the ESOL writing class: Blending rhetorical fluency with grammatical accuracy

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Abstract: This paper argues for an overt innovational shift in praxis, as well as classroom configuration in the ESOL writing class by calling for a move away from the current foci on process-based pedagogies for newcomer populations, to an explicit teaching of modeling strategies with concomitant practice opportunities provided in the ESOL writing class. It is argued that explicit, sequenced instruction in the domains of rhetorical structure as well as grammatical accuracy provide ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners in the emerging stages of language learning with a more concrete grasp of meaning, structure and grammar in rhetorical construction. The modeling strategies proposed in the paper focus on a simultaneous building of rhetorical fluency and grammatical accuracy via spotlighted and sequenced strategies which afford learners practice in smaller chunks of composition including but not limited to thesis statement writing, varied paragraph organization, multiple modes of exposition, and grammatical complexity all in a bid to generate rhetorical depth and grammatical detail in writing. In short, both form and function need to be explicitly taught in the ESOL writing class with adequate opportunities provided for rhetorical practice. Using a meticulous blend of meaningful, authentic and purposeful tasks combined with one-on-one instruction which incorporates a variety of visual and rhetorical modeling strategies, emerging writers, it is argued a move from controlled to automatic writing fluency within a short time span. The pedagogy proposed in the current paper spotlights the specific learner, rather than the writing process and entails a move away from traditional, teacher-fronted classrooms to targeted, workshop-centered configurations which permit for one-on-one conferencing in the ESOL writing class. The visually rendered modeling strategies proposed in this paper argue for writing instruction for ESOL students which is learner responsive, relevant and practical.

Key words: ESOL writers; paragraph structure; grammar teaching; practice and modeling strategies

1. Introduction:

The current paper calls for a rethinking of pure process-based approaches in the teaching of second language writers in the middle-school classroom. Evidence is provided from a detailed case study of the writing of a Korean, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) middle-school student in an American school setting to make a case for rethinking the efficacy of classic process-based approaches to ESOL writing pedagogy at this grade level. Analysis from a detailed, longitudinal case study of one specific writer demonstrates 3 recurrent problems emerging in the writing of this middle schooler. First, the student's writing lacked clear paragraph structure. In one extreme case, an entire essay was written in the form of a mono-paragraphed essay. Second, the over-

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preponderance of grammatical errors affected the composition's readability. In fact, in a 1,132-word essay of 81 sentences, there were a total of 86 grammatical errors along with an additional 20 mechanical errors involving punctuation and capitalization. This brought the average number of the 106 error encounters to one error per 10 words in the essay. Finally, the student's compositions lacked a clear, anchoring thesis statement, a common problem also noted in the writings of intermediate and advanced ESOL writers. With such re-occurring formal and functional discrepancies in the writing of ESOL writers, it is no accident that content-area teachers who often lack training in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) pedagogy react with frustration to the newcomer students. Ferris and Hedgecock (2005, p. 262) have described this problem as "stigmatizing errors" viewed as "irritating to a native speaker audience".

This paper argues for an overt innovational shift in praxis, as well as classroom configuration in the writing class, and consequently, involves a 2-pronged methodology in the teaching of ESOL writing in middle school. It calls for a shift away from the current foci on writing process analyses by teaching product-based modeling strategies, which are of particular utility to ESOL learners at this learning stage. The modeling strategies proposed focus on a simultaneous building of rhetorical fluency and grammatical accuracy. In short, both form and function need to be taught in the writing class. Using sequenced tasks, people can move emerging writers from controlled to automatic writing fluency. Operating on the assumption that writing is "creating original text for an authentic audience" (Samway, 2006, p. 22), this paper calls for the use of visual templates which reflect a mix of both graphic and acronym-based strategies. Adopting this method of writing instruction would immediately empower emerging ESOL writers with the accuracy and fluency they need for advanced expository college-based writing. The current paper proposes a model of writing instruction called MAP, which refers to visually rendered writing instruction strategies that are Meaningful, Authentic and Purposeful (MAP). In other words, the writing pedagogy proposed in this paper, provides theoretically grounded maps of strategies and steps, so that teachers and learners can navigate through the abstractness of English grammar and English rhetorical form. Consequently, both teachers and learners are given concrete starting points, routes of access and destination points in the writing class. This would ensure rhetorical fluency and grammatical accuracy in multifarious expository genres within and across grade levels in the middle school.

The pedagogy proposed in the current paper spotlights the specific learner, rather than the writing process. Also, it entails a move away from traditional teacher-fronted classrooms to targeted, workshop-centered classes which permit for one-on-one conferencing in the middle-school ESOL writing class. Such an approach would provide composition instruction to ESOL students within an atmosphere, which is "responsive to specific students' needs, meaningful and contextualized" (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005, p. 272).

2. Context

For decades, there has been an unabashed application of native speaker teaching methodologies on newcomer students. A recent example is the application of whole language methodologies on beginning ESOL students whose efficacy for beginning ESOL students has already been called into question and whose theoretical base assumes linguistic fluency (Aaron, 1991). Also being questioned is the recent focus on content-based instruction in middle and high school students by practitioners lacking the content knowledge of science, social studies or mathematics (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The current approach to middle school ESOL writing argues for a move away from native speaker methodologies in the teaching of ESOL learners. Instead, it recognizes the

specific uniqueness of writing in a second language and calls for innovative pedagogies to teach ESOL writing in the 21st century classroom. The whole-scale adaptation of process-based methodologies to the ESOL classroom, while well intentioned, is disempowering to the practitioner since it fosters a “dysfunctional” model of teacher dependency on theorizations postulated by researchers (Clarke, 1994, p. 9). Blind application of ivory tower theorizations to actual classrooms is neither logical nor practical, especially since it also disempowers ESOL learners, because it does not effectively recognize the specific challenges involved in L2 writing. As some researchers have recently pointed out, while L2 writing shares similarities with L1 writing (Leki, 1992), there are many key differences which need “to be acknowledged and addressed by those who deal with L2 writers if these writers are to be treated fairly and taught effectively” (Silva & Matsuda, 2001, p. 671). The wholesale application of native speaker methodologies on ESOL learners, a population with its own specific challenges, fails to provide relevant or effective teaching practices in writing to learners, many of whom graduate from American high schools and matriculate into college, where they drop out because of their lack of basic academic writing skills (Scarcella, 2003). Unfortunately, a commonly reported scenario involves ESOL students who consistently “fail the course exit exam, and the university’s writing proficiency exam” (Ferris, 2005, p. 6).

The current paper uses evidence from a longitudinal study of an actual ESOL middle school student’s writing to call for a move away from pure process-based writing approaches. Such approaches provide a linear, top-down concentration on the processes of writing (pre-writing, composing, revising and editing). The current paper instead proposes hybrid, recursive rather than linear methodologies based on second language research. The proposal is to utilize strategies of modeling inherent in the defunct, product-based methodologies of previous writing paradigms, and to provide students with the necessary practice, conscious awareness and eventual automaticity of the key formal and functional details of writing (McLaughlin, 1990; Brown, 2000). While the trend in writing pedagogy continues to be a focus on process-based writing over product-based pedagogies (Kroll, 2001, p. 220), more and more researchers are beginning to acknowledge, albeit only in passing reference, the benefits of some elements of product-based paradigms of yore. This is important especially for students who “lack the mastery of language skills” of native English speakers (Kroll, 2001, p. 220). Such students in effect, need “writing activities that involve a variety of grammatical manipulations, the imitation of models constructed for teaching purposes, (and the) preparation of short texts using material supplied to the student writer” (Kroll, 2001, p. 220). Such an approach will “serve a function in helping students acquire familiarity with the nature of English-language texts and in laying the ground-work for more complex writing tasks to follow” (Kroll, 2001, p. 220). Corroborating this research is the longitudinal study of HAN and Ernst-Slavit (1999) which reported on a flailing Chinese-speaking writer who actually excelled in a skills-oriented class which used a center-based pedagogy based on modeling and practice (p.149). A similar finding is reported in the research of Birnbaum (1982) who demonstrated accelerated proficiency in writing in ESOL students via a program based on demonstration, modeling and meaningful practice.

3. Curriculum, tasks and materials: Identifying the MAP in writing

One of the key elements in second language writing pedagogy is recognizing the distinction between form and function and ensuring that teaching strategies in the writing class consistently and systematically address both rhetorical fluency and formal accuracy at all time. Figure 1 demonstrates in broad terms what middle-school teachers have to think about when approaching writing in newcomer populations. After all, research has chronicled the bafflement that most teachers experience concerning where to begin when it comes to ESOL

learners at this stage (Brisk & Harrington, 2007; Samway, 2006). It is important to realize that linear process-based pedagogies which are based on prewriting, composing and revision/editing stages fail to recognize that writing, like its sister skill of reading is simultaneously idiosyncratic and recursive (Samway, 2006; Campbell, 1998). Consequently, it behooves teachers to prepare ESOL students with systematically designed strategies, which they could in turn utilize whatever stage they are in the writing process. Also noteworthy, and based on recent cognitive research (Hays, 2000) is the recognition that it is really only in the pre-writing and revision stages that teachers can actually provide overt intervention strategies. Recent think-aloud protocol researches (Hays, 2000; Hays and Flower, 1980) have demonstrated that the actual composing process is an internal and learner-triggered mix of affective, cognitive and memory-based variables, and consequently, beyond the scope of the teacher. Effective writing instruction at the middle-school level entails giving students enough opportunities to master the rhetorical forms of western expository styles of writing. Only then will students be able to synthesize these skills with grammatical accuracy at the sentence level. Eventually, the goal is for ESOL learners to be able to integrate their third most precious resource, in Whorf's (1956) terms, their unique cultural and linguistic world-view (Bonvillain, 2003, p. 48) into their writing. The successful inclusion of ESOL learners' cultural world-view into their essays has been successfully chronicled in the research of Schecter and Cummins (2003), and is arguably one of the most crucial and unique resources that ESOL learners bring to the mainstream writing class when contrasted with their peers.

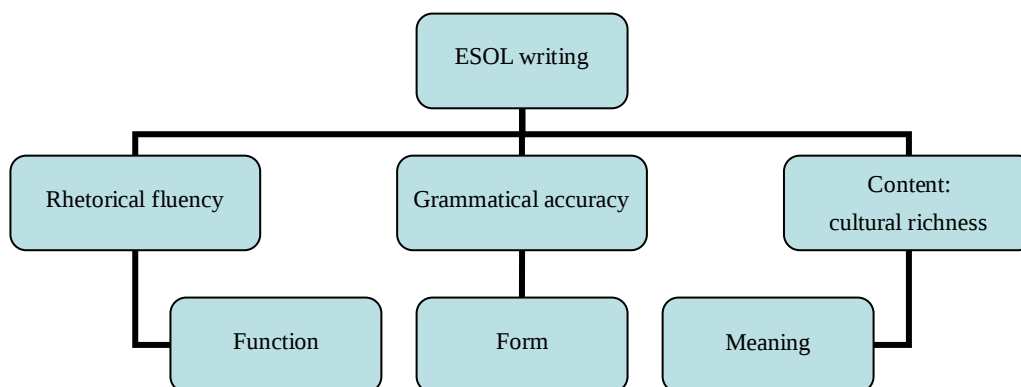


Figure 1 Variables in the writing class

For the middle-school teachers, this paper calls for a systematic use of writing strategies, which build rhetorical fluency, grammatical accuracy and content uniqueness (cultural richness) in all lessons. A careful selection of tasks on the part of the teacher, which provide enough opportunities for modeling and practice in formal, functional and semantic properties in the composition process will empower L2 learners in their writing. Stated differently, with careful and systematic planning on the part of the teacher, students in daily writing tasks could be given enough practice opportunities to develop the much-needed formal and functional fluency in their writing so as to effectively showcase their unique newcomer experiences as writers. Recent research has convincingly demonstrated the often lop-sided emphasis on the details of meaning over form or function in writing classes across the nation (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Such approach as the sample essay demonstrates is particularly disempowering to newcomer students for the recent Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) essay stipulations faithfully portend students will now also be required to produce more high-stakes impromptu writing (SAT Essay, 2007). The trend seems to be towards more product-based writing in high-stakes forum, such as college entrance

examinations which are timed and rubric scored. Also an increasing fad is high-stakes assessments, such as the mandatory state-wide assessments as stipulated under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), which also require important Brief Constructed Responses (BCRs) as well as Extended Constructed Responses (ECRs)—an example being the 2007 Maryland State Assessments (High School Assessments (HSA), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), 2007). This paper calls for a balanced attention and inclusion of all 3 areas: form, function and cultural meaning in specific classes for both short and long term implementation.

4. Outlining theoretical issues

Contrastive rhetoric research paradigms (Connor, 1996) have clearly demonstrated that for most newcomer populations, a mastery of the western essay entails an overt knowledge of the “writer-responsible” as contrasted with “reader-responsible” (Leki, 1992, p. 90) formal features of the western rhetorical tradition. Such knowledge includes but is not limited to a conscious awareness of the 4 primary attributes of western writing. The first entails awareness that western writing is essentially hierarchical, i.e., the thesis statement is linked to detailed and well illustrated explanations linked to sub-points which in turn connect covertly to the thesis statement. The second attribute is an awareness of directly supported evidence in an essay, i.e., evidence-based argumentation with an avoidance of vague wordage in claim statements and an avoidance of “irrelevant” supporting details. The third attribute is knowledge of the innovation-based writing culture with its emphasis on originality and creativity of ideas. The final is awareness of the argument-centered writing style, which consists of an overt debatable tone consistently maintained throughout the essay (Leki, 1992, pp. 88-104). To ensure that students exhibit these 4 attributes in their writing at a very early stage in their writing careers, the current paper calls for the design of tasks in the writing class which are in the words of Lewis and Hill (1992) simultaneously “useful” and theoretically grounded in research on L2 writing. Below (see Figure 2) is a visual model of the MAP model being proposed and the various stages writing instructors could attempt to follow to assist in effective lesson plan designing for newcomer students. It must be emphasized that this paper is not arguing for a model of writing which is atomistic or decontextualized. Rather, this paper insists on providing ESOL students with concrete models of effective writing praxis, which to the extent possible, are visually rendered in order to teach the complex cognitive act of writing (Hays, 2000).

To demonstrate some practical applications of the MAP model, an actual sample of student writing is provided as a reference point for the proposed strategies. The middle school student’s sample essay reproduced is exact as it was written with all the formal discrepancies as in the original¹. In 2 separate professional development workshops designed to demonstrate to in-service teachers the strategies proposed in the current paper, the same essay was given to 16 in-service teachers. All had to read the essay in a warm-up activity and respond to the 3 questions given below before the MAP plan of action was provided to them:

- (1) List any major rhetorical problems that you see in the essay? These could be in terms of overall content, organization or any other areas.
- (2) What are the commonly occurring grammatical errors? Provide a classification of error types below.
- (3) How would you ensure grammatical accuracy in this ESL student’s writing? In bulleted form, jot down

¹ Even though permission has been given to use this sample of writing, one of the conditions for its inclusion in this article is that it appear as written by an anonymous writer especially because of the low numbers of ESOL students currently enrolled in this specific school which could potentially ease in the identification of this specific student who does not want to be identified. Please contact the author if you need any specific details.

some ideas/procedures you would take as this student's teacher. What plan of action would you use?

My Dream

I was in my room before it all begins; it was the night before the Christmas eve, and my parents went to the grandma's house. They asked me if I wanted to come with them but I refused. I called my friend but they all left for Christmas. So I was just lying on my bedroom watching TV. Then I heard sound of Helicopter. So I went outside to see what's going on and I saw about 3 tanks, 2 helicopter and about 100 men holding guns. "Why are you still here?" one of the guy asked me as he saw me. "What's going on?" I asked. "Terrorists attacking this city come on move it into the Helicopter!" then the Helicopter landed and someone pushed me in. As I go up to sky I saw lots of dead people and broken buildings. "Where are you taking me?" I asked the pilot. "I'm heading to the north, I hope this is the right way" "but my parents are in Seattle WA" I shouted because the sound of Helicopter and the weather was too loud. "They will be fine!" said the pilot. "Why are they attacking the city?" "They are terrorists; they are attacking all the United State right now" he replied. It was very cold and I was very hungry, the weather was terrible I couldn't see anything because of the snow. Than something hit the copter and made the copter span rapidly everything went black. I opened my eyes, it was morning and everything was covered in snow, behind me there was a crashed copter and I found the body of dead pilot. It was still snowing, I was middle of nowhere. I didn't know what to do so I just kept walking. Everything was white and there is nothing except the ground and sky. There was no mountain, no hill, no trees, and no water. I was very cold but I kept walking and it became dark. I was so hungry and cold, I was about to freeze to death then I saw a deer walking to me. I realized that now I was lying on the back of deer. Deer was still walking. Suddenly, I felt warm and cozy. "Hi there" I heard someone talking so I got up to see whose talking and saw a short person with pointy ears. I look around and saw lots of short people with pointy ears working. "Where am I?" I asked "You're in North Pole Level 2 where we check all the toys, my name is Finrod Tasardur, the elf" he said. "This is where Santa works?" "No he works at Level 4 where the entire name lists are". Then there was loud beeping sound and everyone went to the middle of the room. "Come on hurry up!" said Finrod and he also went to the middle of the room, I followed him and when everyone was on the middle the ground started moving. The ground was going up and I was the Level 3,4,5, and 6 sign as it goes up. We were all outside again and I saw millions of elves standing in a row. A tall, fat guy with red suit on it was talking I realize that he was Santa Claus. "The terrorist were attacking the city of United State!" he yelled "Get ready for Emergency code4!" The beeping sound stopped and all elves were going back in. Somehow Santa found me standing still and said "You are the human elves were talking about, welcome to the North Pole" "Where are does elves going?" I asked him. "They're going fight Terrorists" Suddenly all elves went out flying like a jet. And then one second later they were all gone. "Wow, so this is the North Pole! My friends told me there is no such thing as elves, North Pole, or Santa Clause. "And that why they not getting any present every year" said Santa friendly. We went inside and he gave me a hot chocolate with marshmallow in. "How did you get here" he asked me but I fell asleep. When I woke up Santa Clause was changing his red suit to black. "What's going on I asked as I saw his griming face. "Terrorist killed the all the police, FBI, and CIA and they also got all my elves I heard they are now all over the world I'm going to stop them before they ruin the Christmas, you stay here until I come back" "No, I want to go with you to see my parent is ok." "I see, come on get on" He stepped in his sleigh and I followed. "Let's go!" he shouted and the sleight started went up. After few minutes sleigh landed in Seattle, WA. There were many people with back mask on. They were holding AK-47, M-12, MP-5, and some of them are holding M-92F. "Stay here and don't breathe until I told you to breathe." He told me and went out with his sack. He opened his sack and check me if I was holding my nose. Then he fart really loud so and then all the terrorists around us fainted. "That's what happen when you drink too much soda." He gave me a sign to breathe again and all fainted Terrorist got sucked into the sack. When we were trying to go to another place there was a very strong light top of us and slowly we got sucked by a huge dish. I saw Jelly-like human talking with Santa "This is my friend Popo Gamwich of the Bree Gamwiches he is from another planet, I asked his help to get rid of all Terrorists" said Santa proudly. Then the huge dish stared moving, it went up until the earth seemed so small. Then it made a huge black hole and sucked all the Terrorist. "It all finished." said Santa. Then he gave me some hot chocolate powder "This is what you drank in my house take theses if you like" I took them and put it in my pocket and Popo gave me a black ring "RuUBb tIS LInG ipe U deed mE ahGain" he said. "Well let's take this kid back to his hom—". I woke up in my bedroom my TV was on my parents came in. "Mom, Dad did Terrorist get you?" "What Terrorist?" said my dad straightening his glasses. "I think he had a bad dream" said mom. "What day is it?" I asked "Its Christmas eve. We came back from your grandma's house early" "I...I...was ..with." "Come on down, Let's eat breakfast first" than they went out. I went down thinking it was dream but

I found the ring on my hand and couple of hot chocolate powder in my pocket.

Analysis: Showcasing the MAP model (see Figure 2)

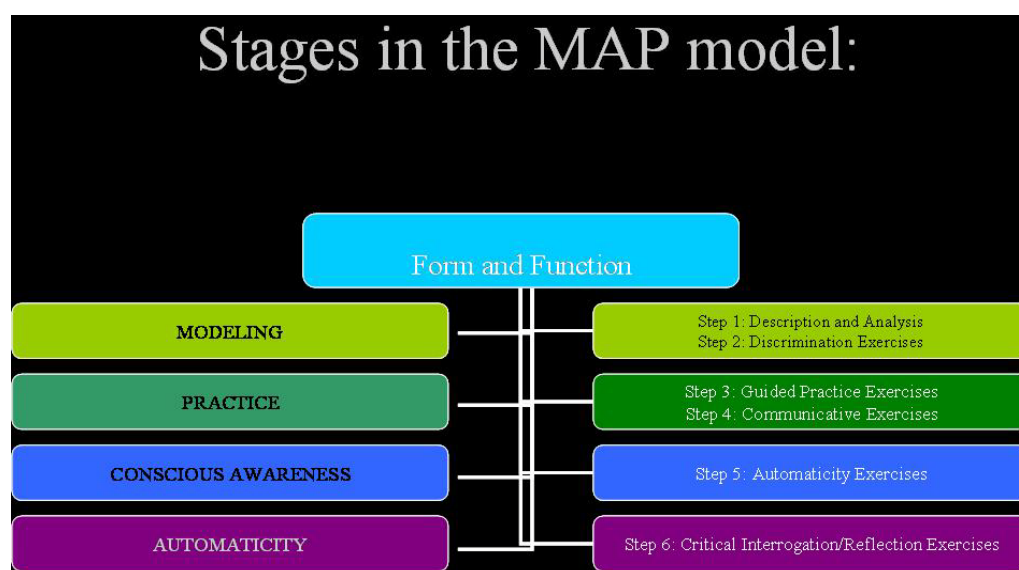


Figure 2 Protocols for modeling and practice

The responses of the in-service teachers reiterate the need for the MAP model which is being presented here. While the following example strategies are cited in relation to the sample essay provided above, they could just as easily be generalized to any ESOL student writing class.

Diagnosis: Identifying positives and negatives in the essay.

This student's essay like all writings needs to be analyzed in terms of 5 broad areas of immediate focus.

(1) Thesis statement construction: Since this is an expressive essay, a clear thesis may not be the goal. However, ESOL students would benefit from practice in the rhetoric of expository essay writing. Expository essays are what middle schoolers will eventually encounter later on in their academic lives. Such essays are clearly structured, and allow students with different cultural and rhetorical styles to "see" the linear mode of argumentation dominant in western styles of composition. Consequently, an explicit focus on the anatomy of thesis statement construction will aid beginning writers.

MAP Strategy 1: For beginning writers who need a concrete starting point, an effective strategy is the use of template acronyms which draw students' "attention" and raise their "consciousness" (McLaughlin, 1990) to the salient elements which make up thesis statements. Figure 3 is an effective strategy which has been used in several L2 classes with success. It is up to the teacher to decide whether to use this strategy in the pre-writing or the revision stages. Drawing students' attention to these key elements can occur either deductively (before they begin the draft) or inductively (after they have generated a draft). By utilizing a visual of a scud missile, students can get the picture of how targeted western expository writing actually is. In line with the MAP model being stipulated, students need to be provided with models of writing which embed successful thesis statements. Also useful would be examples of essays which fail to provide effective thesis statements. By visually aligning thesis statements with the parts outlined in the following acronym, emerging ESOL writers will be equipped with a pre-writing strategy since they could brainstorm on potential thesis statements for a paper. Additionally, they can potentially be equipped with a revision strategy in which they examine the efficacy of their thesis statements

relative to the parts outlined in the acronym after they have produced their first drafts.

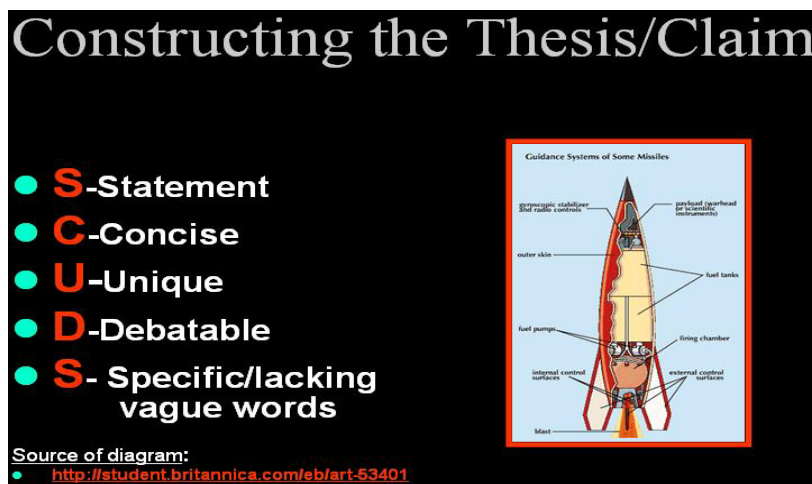


Figure 3 Visualizing thesis statement construction

A follow-up revision strategy to build consciousness awareness is to provide students with a template strategy in peer-review sheets which include an unfinished declarative sentence eliciting awareness of their thesis statements. They could be required to complete these worksheets before sharing with their peers in the form of “I am writing this essay to prove that: _____”.

It is clear that the writer of the sample essay would have benefited from such an overt focus on thesis statement construction.

(2) Paragraph structure: The sample essay lacks clear paragraph structure. This student would benefit from a targeted tutorial program offering individualized instruction in paragraph construction and coherence. Paragraph coherence would have to overtly be taught using models of writing from the content areas of science, social studies or language arts, all of which reflect either a consistently inductive or deductive ordering of details.

MAP strategy 2: Teachers should choose authentic essays which exhibit the types of paragraph structures provided below. They could then cut the paragraphs into strips asking students to piece together both the individual paragraphs as well as the entire essay. An excellent essay which has been used in this class to model paragraph structure is the classic “100% American” by Ralph Linton². The paragraphs in this narrative essay have been color coded and visually pieced together with 100% accuracy by students and staff alike.

Paragraph development: Tutorials need to focus on the 2 major paragraph organizational styles: inductive and deductive. The visual diagrams (see Figure 4 and Figure 5) may help some ESOL students see the benefits of the 2 “spatial positions” for topic sentence placement (Wyrick, 2008) in paragraphs. The first entails placing the topic sentence at the outset of the paragraph (Deductive style). The second spatial position involves placing the topic sentence at the end of a paragraph that is, after sufficient details have been presented (Inductive style). Again, a visually relevant model helps students at the middle-school level “see” organizational fluency and coherence rather than being “told” about it.

² Due to copyright restrictions the paragraphs cannot be reproduced below though the essay is readily available on the internet.

Inductive styles move from details→topic sentence—a triangle³
 Details↓

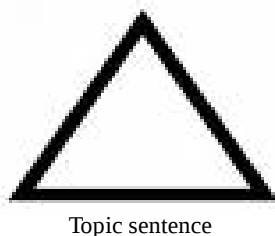


Figure 4 Visualizing inductive paragraph design

Deductive style: Topic sentence→details—an inverted triangle
 Topic sentence ↓

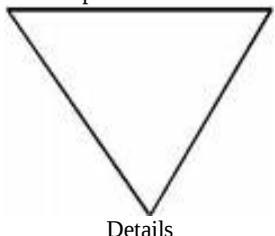


Figure 5 Visualizing deductive paragraph design

For most ESOL students, graphic organizers and flow charts with templates of paragraph structure details are particularly effective in teaching students about the internal structure of paragraphs in English. Such models are especially useful if culled from content areas like science and social studies. Writing from these disciplinary areas would trigger effective imitation and practice of both inductive and deductive organizational structure.

(3) Paragraph cohesion: Also missing in the sample essay are clear transitions between the major events being recounted. The student needs to be given practice in the fluent and appropriate use of common transitional phrases, such as “then”, “next”, “immediately after this”, and a host of other such commonly occurring transitional phrases.

MAP strategy 3: Again, the student should be exposed to writing products from the content areas of science. Scientific paragraphs often explain processes, and would consequently permit students to see examples of how transitional devices actually function in authentic discourse. In fact, in the cited Ralph Linton’s essay, it is the transitional devices which lead to a 100% reconstruction on the part of students whenever this essay has been used in classes. Again, an overt use of transitional words needs to be elicited. One useful strategy is to utilize authentic writing models, and then provide writing tasks which require the use of narrative transitional devices on the part of students. An often cited model essay to elicit automaticity regarding the use of transitional devices is Wuther Crue’s visually based essay: *Ordeal by Cheque*⁴. Students have to “piece” together the mysteries of the protagonists as these emerge on visually rendered checks. In the process of completing such a task, students inevitably and subconsciously utilize appropriate and relevant transitional words in their narrative accounts of the mysteries surrounding the protagonists in this uniquely “written” essay. Meaningful activities will provide sufficient opportunity for practice and eventual automaticity in the use of transitional words.

(4) Rhetorical sequencing: In the sample essay, the writer exhibits a clear narrative sequence of events and

³ This is a common paragraph form the ESOL student uses in the sample essay.

⁴ Due to copyright restrictions the essay cannot be reproduced below though the essay is readily available on the internet.

successfully develops descriptive details. Like all students, an overt outlining or pre-writing technique of mapping out a narrative sequence of events will enhance in the development of a clearer paragraph structure. While most readers will note the close mapping of this student's story to popular media stories such as the recent blockbuster *The Polar Express*, Samway (2006) has cautioned people not to see this as a negative, but rather as a teachable moment. According to her:

Emergent and less confident young writers often retell favorite stories, movies, and TV shows, which sometimes distresses teachers, who urge their students to write their own stories. As retelling appears to act as a support to and bridge for emergent writers, and given that published authors, frequently retell familiar stories including fairytales, folktales, and legends, perhaps it would be wiser for teachers to teach about retelling, as in a genre study (p. 70).

The sample essay is quite successful in developing mystery and humor, which further affirms the innate creative skills the student already has. However, it is key to emphasize that narrative and descriptive writing—2 of the more popular modes of exposition in elementary and middle-school writing, fade into other more organizationally and linguistically complex rhetorical modes of exposition in the high-school and college years (Samway, 2006). To cite an example, consider the following Extended Constructed Response (ECR) prompt taken from the mandatory Maryland High School Assessments (MHSA)—the type of writing all middle schoolers will eventually be required to produce:

Write a well organized essay that describes a childhood experience you would like to share with a young person. Develop your ideas by describing the experience you would like to share and by explaining why you would like to share it. Be sure that your essay is fully developed, that it is logically organized, and that your choice of words clearly expresses your thoughts (HSA, Maryland High-School Assessment, English Public Release, p. 3).

MAP Strategy 4: Newcomer students would benefit from an explicit focus on what the author has called the hierarchy of organization in expository discourse. While researchers such as Blanton and Kroll (2005) have cautioned against a throwback to the atomistic focus on modes of exposition prevalent in product-based pedagogies of yore, the author argues that part of the failure these teachers experienced was the consequence of teaching the modes of exposition as isolated rhetorical styles rather than as a “hierarchy” of options. Taught as a hierarchy, narration and description would form the bedrock of most expository writing. As the prompt question above clearly indicates, students in general, but ESOL students in particular, would benefit from a visual discussion of how rhetorical modes of exposition intersect with each other. Changing teaching praxis to better prepare ESOL students for high-stakes assessment will not only empower learners, but additionally galvanize pedagogy to be theoretically grounded in assessment research, inevitably constituting “positive washback” in the high-stakes assessment era (CHENG & Watanabe, 2004).

Again, visual renditions of these abstract forms of logical organization would permit newcomer students to actually understand the fluidity of these characterizations as well as their relationship to each other. Figure 6(b) demonstrates in detail the hierarchy of rhetorical complexity. A mastery of this hierarchy of complexity is argued to equate to rhetorical fluency and automaticity on the part of the author—the goal of this paper. ESOL students need to be exposed to prototypical models of each of these rhetorical modes of exposition. In his thorough analysis of assessment practices in the era of high-stakes testing, Brown (2004) has inevitably harkened to the saliency of modeling in the assessment of ESOL writing potential. Modeling constitutes a key ingredient of product-based paradigms. In Brown's (2004, p. 235) discussion of the efficacy of paragraph construction tasks as an assessment tool, he has categorically concluded that “To a great extent, writing is the art of *emulating* what one

reads” (emphasis mine). He reiterates this assertion when he says, “You read an effective paragraph; you analyze the ingredients of its success; you *emulate* it” (Emphasis mine) (Brown, 2004, p. 235). Crowhurst (1991, pp. 314-338) also has reported on the efficacy of using reading-writing modeling techniques in her study. She calls for the overt instruction of text features which in her study lent modest support for her initial hypothesis that reading persuasive writing in turn improved students’ persuasive writing.

Additionally, teachers would benefit from a sequencing of tasks which would move students from the bottom of the chart to the top of the chart (see Figure 6(b)). In the standards-based curricula (Gottlieb, et al., 2006), this would imply serializing writing tasks both within and across grade levels in the middle school in a bid to account for this rhetorical complexity. When sequentially organized, such instruction would transition emerging writers from easier to more complex rhetorical organization as demonstrated in Figures 6(a) and 6(b).

Tell→Describe→Explain→Compare/Contrast→Classify→Analyze→Define→Justify→Argue

Figure 6(a) Sequencing modes of exposition

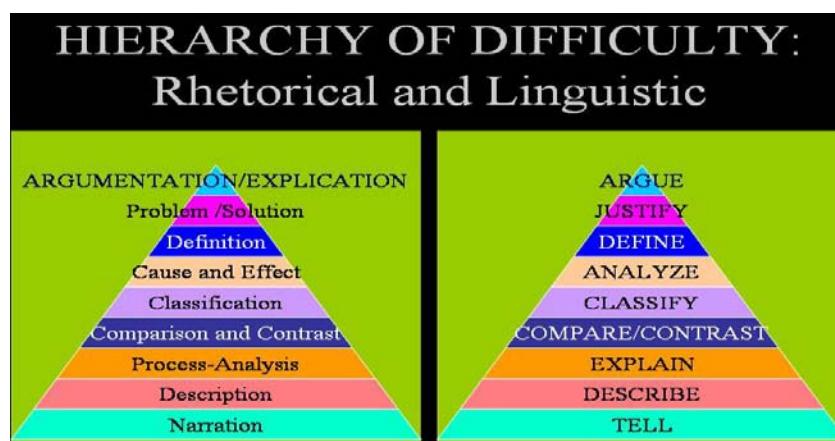


Figure 6(b) The hierarchy of knowledge structures

What such a model does is to prepare students and teachers for the multiple-content writing encounters, ESOL learners will have in their language arts, science, social studies and mathematics classes, to name a few examples.

While the juxtaposition of charts in the diagram above (see Figure 6(b)) showcases only one type of indicator or descriptor verb commonly used in standards articulations (Gottlieb, et al., 2006), it should not be assumed that these are the only descriptor verbs available to identify the rhetorical modes of exposition outlined above. The descriptors are mainly used as examples to demonstrate the need to structure and sequence writing tasks in the ESOL classroom with care. With such planning, emerging writers will move from easier and easily organized rhetorical frameworks to more abstract and complex frameworks. To cite an example, with a meticulous sequencing of tasks, students could first use the chronology of time to narrate a sequence of events, for instance in a language arts class. Next, they could employ more complex rhetorical modes, such as analyzing or determining the causation of historically catastrophic events, for example in a Social Studies class. Finally, they could utilize much more complex rhetorical frameworks subsuming knowledge and fluency in the logical patterns of organization of multiple rhetorical modes to justify an experimental finding, for example in a Science class. This last task would entail employing a mix of multiple modes of exposition: definition, classification, comparison/contrast, to name a few examples from a host of expository modes.

(5) Grammatical accuracy: Learning written academic language skills in a new language takes 7-15 years of intensive study (Brown, 2000; Samway & McKeon, 2007). Even native students have to be trained over several years in the styles of academic discourse which they are to encounter in their careers (Leki, 1992). Accordingly, it is imperative that all teachers in any educational establishment serving ESOL learners be educated on the fallacy of equating grammatical problems in ESOL writing with aptitude problems. There is no doubt as the sample essay shows that ESOL writers' papers often "contain excessive grammatical and lexical inaccuracies by the standards of English-speaking academic readers" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 261). In spite of researchers who have vociferously argued against the effectiveness of grammar teaching in the second language writing class (Truscott, 1996) recent "empirical evidence strongly suggests that error feedback can help students both in the short and long term" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 264). The MAP strategy 5 demonstrates how this can in fact be achieved.

MAP Strategy 5: Grammar is the major problem area of the student writer in the sample essay provided. There is more than one error per sentence in the essay creating a very distracting scenario for the reader. Since the errors are so student-specific, an individualized tutorial plan needs to be developed which specifically and systematically deals with the major error forms in the student's work. Such a plan of action is increasingly being advocated in current research (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), and would empower ESOL writers with the necessary practice in their specific, idiosyncratic grammatical discrepancies (Frodesen & Holten, 2003). Such a focus on formal properties is "not only beneficial but necessary" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 272). This paper calls for an immediate classification scheme of all idiosyncratic errors specific to any and all L2 learners on the part of teachers. Stated differently, this would entail a classification scheme of error types for each individual L2 student present in the class. A classification of some of the major error types in the sample essay is provided below. It is suggested that teachers or tutors continue to classify major error types in every student's work, and address each error type via targeted mini-lessons⁵. While spelling is also noted to be a problem for this specific student, a few mini-lessons on the effective use of computerized spell-checkers should rectify this problem.

While some advocates have argued that ESOL students be encouraged to keep "error logs" (Ferris, 2002), in which they track the frequency of their own errors, the actual applicability of this strategy at the middle-school level, where students are just beginning to learn the meta-language of English grammar is impractical. Consequently, teachers at the middle-school level need to be the initiators and creators of the classification schemes. An example of such a classification of error types and one based on the sample essay is provided (see Table 1). Such initiative on the part of teachers will result in the design of effective one-on-one tutorials or "error conferences" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 284). Such a focused approach would address rampant error types in a consistent rather than random fashion. In rural schools where itinerant ESOL teachers are the norm rather than the exception, the MAP model would be particularly useful, especially for ESOL learners in pull-out scenarios.

5. Recommendations: Steps in developing targeted mini-lessons

Visually rendered mini-lessons could be developed for each of the following steps based on the creativity of the teacher. The following systematic plan is in line with the overarching theoretical model of this paper which calls for the presentation of grammatical tasks via meaningful, authentic and purposeful activities. Utilizing each student's individual grammatical deviations as the content design for the individualized mini-lessons would result

⁵ Each ESOL student will have specific grammar problems. It is recommended that a similar classification of major error types be developed for each ESOL student to permit for focused one-on-one tutorial lessons.

Table 1 A sample classification scheme: Major error forms in the sample essay

Grammatical error	Examples from the essay: "My Dream"
1. Tense: Incorrect tense shifts	"I <u>was</u> in my room before it all <u>begins</u>" "So I went outside to see <u>what's</u> going on" "As I <u>go</u> up to sky" "Than something hit the copter and made the copter <u>span</u> rapidly" "Everything was white and there <u>is</u> nothing except the ground and sky" "I look around and saw lots of short people. . ." "I saw the level 3,4, 5 and 6 sign as it <u>goes up</u>" "I <u>realize</u> that he was Santa Claus" "Stay here and don't breathe until I <u>told</u> you to breathe."
2. Agreement: Subject-verb Pronoun/antecedent	"That's what happen when you drink too much soda" "And that why they not getting any present every year." "It all finished said Santa" "I took them and put it in my pocket. . ." "I want to go with you to see my parent is ok." "There were many people with black mask on."
3. Article misuse	"It was the night before <u>the</u> Christmas eve" "...my parents went to <u>the</u> grandma's house" "As I <u>go</u> up to <u>sky</u>" "Terrorist killed the all the police. . ." "Terrorist got sucked into the sack."
4. Missing articles: Definite and indefinite	"Then I heard <u>sound</u> of <u>helicopter</u>" "the sound of Helicopter and the weather was too loud" "... I found the body of <u>dead</u> pilot" "I was lying on the back of deer. Deer was still walking to me." "Then there was loud beeping sound" "... everyone went to middle of the room" "a tall fat guy with red suit on it was talking. . ." "After few minutes sleigh landed in Seattle, WA" "I went down thinking it was dream but I found the ring on my hand. . ."
5. Missing plurals	"... I saw about 3 tanks, 2 <u>helicopter</u> and about 100 men" "... one of the <u>guy</u> asked me as he saw me" "... all the United <u>State</u> right now" "The <u>terrorist</u> were attacking the city of United State" "... I want to go with you to see my <u>parent</u> is ok." "There were many people with black <u>mask</u> on."
6. Missing prepositions/wrong prepositions	"I was middle of nowhere" "They are attacking all the United State" "and when everyone was on the middle the ground started moving." "... he gave me a hot chocolate with marshmallow in" "... there was a very strong light top of us. . ."
7. Missing infinitive constructions	"They're going fight terrorists" "... and the sleigh started went up" "He opened his sack and check me if I was holding my nose."
8. mixed contractions/homophones (Pronunciation interference)	"You are the human elves <u>were</u> talking about" "So I got up to see <u>whose</u> talking. . ." "Where are <u>does</u> elves going?" "I asked him as I saw his <u>griming</u> face" "Come on down, Let's eat breakfast first" <u>than</u> they went out."
9. Capitalization/Punctuation	"I hope this is the right way" "but my parents are in Seattle WA" I shouted because the sound of Helicopter and the weather was too loud." "Its Christmas eve. We came back from your grandma's house early"
10. Run-on sentences/fragments	"Terrorist killed the all the police, FBI, and CIA and they also got all my elves I heard that they are now all over the world I'm going to stop them before they ruin the Christmas, you stay here until I come back." "I woke up in my bedroom my TV was on my parents came in."

in lessons taught to address the individual needs of the specific student rather than generalized grammar lessons

taught to the entire class. Strong proponents of mini-lessons, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) have stated that “probably the most overlooked application type is the mini-lesson focused on the student’s own writing, but this is arguably the most important” (p. 275).

Targeted tutorials in grammar: These tutorials need to be carefully sequenced to address the major grammatical problems noted in Table 1. Teachers or tutors should only focus on a maximum of 2 or 3 error types at a time to avoid cognitive overload. For example, if the student has been given instruction on plurals and articles, the teacher should only focus on plurals and articles in the next essay s/he turns in. Teachers should avoid marking all errors which occur in a particular essay, and should strive to only mark errors under focus. The targeted marking of specific error types over the course of the term as opposed to the marking of all occurring errors, a scenario which most students report to be overwhelming, will provide for a much more focused and effective development of grammar skills on the part of the student. Such approach will invariably promote awareness of individual, student-specific, error-types, and will result in more manageable learning on the part of the student-writer.

6. Sequencing writing tasks for accuracy

Tutorials should provide grammatical instruction in the noted areas and follow a clear sequence of instruction which moves from controlled practice to automaticity in the use of the problem structures on the part of the student. While advocates have proposed mini-lessons for high-school and college level ESOL writing, no systematic plan of action has been postulated for the lower grades, such as middle-school ESOL learners who would especially benefit from a routinized, systematic plan to elicit the necessary “consciousness raising” (Ferris, 2002, pp. 78-85). As already reiterated, such grammatical automaticity is a skill that middle-schoolers will sorely need in their later years.

Step 1: Description and analysis of the grammatical principles: i.e., provide the grammatical rules of the language regarding the deviant form.

Step 2: Discrimination exercises: Provide a simple cloze exercise (at the sentence level) that tests the ability of the student to apply the principle or rule.

Step 3: Guided practice: Pull out errors from the student’s essay and focus on the errors and correct together (teamed practice).

Step 4: Communicative practice: Provide the student with a paragraph containing both correct and incorrect examples of the form and see if the student is able to correct errors of the form under consideration. Only focus on one grammatical form at a time.

Step 5: Automaticity: Practice read-aloud editing skills: An oral line-by-line reading (reading aloud) of a final draft of an essay should be practiced so that the student learns to self-correct, as well as learns independent strategies of self-editing.

Step 6: Critical interrogation: Elicit student reflection on their progress in accuracy development via reflective journaling tasks which prompt them to provide explanations for why slips if they continue to persist seem to be re-occurring. Excellent research evidence exists for reflective writing as a learning tool in the writing class even for middle-school learners (Samway, 2006).

Extensive Reading Programs: A long term solution is to ensure that the student is enrolled in an extensive reading program. Many error types, particularly errors in the use of articles, prepositions, tense and aspect—often

called closed class items (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999)—will only disappear with consistent and continued exposure to correct forms over time. The table 1, based on the sample essay, is an example of the kind of classification scheme which needs to be developed by teachers a priori. Such error classification schemes need to be developed for each and every ESOL writer in the class on the part of the teacher if mini-lessons are to be effective at all. It can safely be argued that at this stage of their education, unless systematically pointed out by their teachers, errors will continue to persist in ESOL learners' writing. Research has shown that young ESOL writers often lack native speaker intuitions for self-editing (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). It is in the error teaching plan that the greatest difference exists between ESOL and mainstream writing instruction. Responsible writing instruction therefore has to explicitly address grammatical errors in the middle-school class in a meaningful and effective way, if errors are not to disenfranchise learners from access to higher levels of education.

(6) Grading/assessment of ESOL writers: While detailed discussions of assessment procedures are beyond the scope of the current paper, it is recommended that grading schemes award discrete points for specific areas in essay writing, such as content, organization, grammar, style, and so on, so that the student “sees” his/her problem areas. Holistic scoring, which often manifests itself as the use of whole letter grades, such as “A” or “B”, makes it hard for the student to independently identify specific areas of strength or weakness. Consequently, this paper calls for the use of analytic over holistic scoring for emerging L2 writers on the part of the teacher (Brown, 2004).

7. The ethics of work-load considerations

It must be emphasized that focused, targeted grammar tutoring is very labor intensive on the part of the teacher, and requires a great deal of a teacher's time. Consequently, if a teacher is handling a case-load of over 30 mainstream students, unless being duly compensated for time and effort (financially), every attempt should be made to schedule tutorials with a paid student-teacher intern or a teaching assistant. This paper calls for the employment of para-professionals with expertise in English grammar. Meticulous planning on the part of the tutor should ensure that a student is getting the level of education and that all students are getting at any educational establishment. As the following remark from an in-service teacher makes clear, a systematic MAP strategy, such as the kind being proposed in this paper can be very useful.

Evaluating an ESOL student's writing exposed me to errors ESOL learners make that I may not typically see in the writing of NES (Native English Speakers). I had to integrate my knowledge of writing instruction and revision techniques with knowledge of difficulties ESOL students face in order to brainstorm methods that would improve the writing skills of ESOL learners. It made me question the effectiveness of my current techniques and rubrics. While my rubrics are categorized, they may be too extensive and not grammatically focused enough for an ESOL student (High-School English Teacher, Queen Anne's County Public Schools, Maryland).

8. Reflections

The proposed paper provides evidence from middle-school ESOL writing to propose an action-based model of bottom-up teaching. Such a methodology focuses on the systematic details of lexical, sentence and paragraph structure. It is argued that a detailed inductive focus on morphology, grammar, paragraph discourse structure and thesis statement construction taught via individualized workshop configurations in the ESOL writing classroom will in fact trigger advanced writing fluency in newcomer populations. As the strategies proposed demonstrate, writing instruction needs to provide differential rather than homogenous instruction for all. When learners are “viewed and treated as distinct learners and writers, it is possible to attend to the individual differences and rates

of learning that the research illustrates, while also holding high standards for all ELLs” (Samway, 2006, p.77). Recent approaches to process writing have consistently cautioned against the use of essentialist paradigms of writing, which utilize atomistic methodologies focusing on the form of writing to instead the adoption of top-down, function-based strategies of “critical writing” (Canagarajah, 2005). In such approaches, “writing is implicated in social conflict, material inequality, cultural difference and power relationships” (Canagarajah, 2005, p.7). However, it is important to question the actual applicability of such paradigms to younger middle-school learners. While such abstract approaches are particularly helpful for students in high-school and college settings, where the main focus is “extensive writing” defined as “the successful management of all the processes and strategies of writing for all purposes, up to the length of an essay, a term paper, a major research project report, or even a thesis” (Brown, 2004, p. 220), their specific cognitive applicability, and more importantly, practicality and relevance for middle-school students whose average age spans 12-14 years old remain to be demonstrated. Also, important in the era of high-stakes testing is the type of writing mastery expected of middle-schoolers, which is often defined as “responsive writing”—writing tasks “requiring learners to perform at a limited discourse level, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating logically connected sequences of two of three paragraphs” (Brown, 2004, p. 220). In fact, one can argue that it is at the elementary school with its focus on imitative and controlled writing, and middle school with its focus on responsive writing—specific schooling stages of emerging abstract cognitive development—where the complexities and nuances of text-internal facts, such as those presented in this paper need to be taught. Only then will students move on to high school and college (extensive writing arenas), equipped with the foundational tools with which to understand the workings of the text-external variables mentioned above, namely, “the discursive and historical forces, linguistic and social considerations” which shape writing (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 7). In fact, only then, will students be equipped with the interrogative power—linguistic and cultural capital so to speak, to question the etymology of privileged cultural rhetorical practices (Bourdieu, 1991).

To reiterate, also included in the argument is a call for a move away from teacher-fronted classrooms to individual-centered classrooms. Teacher-fronted classrooms, the most common classroom configuration in mainstream classes, assume homogenous problem areas in writing. On the other hand, individual-centered classrooms assume differentiated problem areas in writing, and as a result, target learners’ heterogeneity and diversity in the form of workshop-based configurations. Workshop teaching often realizes itself in the form of one-on-one tutoring. In such pedagogical configurations, teachers are able to provide individualized instruction specific to the writing needs of each and every ESOL student. Via the design of customized, targeted and tutoring configurations which focus on building writing automaticity, via a focus on bottom-up details (vocabulary, grammar, thesis sentence and paragraph discourse structure), it is argued that middle-school ESOL students who are limited in time will make the necessary gains to equip them for their high-school and college writing demands. The detailed examples of the case-study of one emerging ESOL 8th grader presented in the current essay lends proof for the adoption of a systematic writing plan in all classes. The 6-step plan moves from exercises in: (1) Description/analysis; to (2) Discrimination tasks; to (3) Guided practice; to (4) Automaticity; to (5) Independent practice, and finally, to (6) Exercises in critical interrogation and reflection.

Why the saliency of instigating writing reform in middle-school pedagogy? Numeric evidence from a recent survey of 1,059 rural ESOL students in 8 school districts spanning over 95 schools in a geographical radius of 103 miles on the Atlantic seaboard of the United States—the site of the current case study—shows the following

demographic breakdown⁶. Approximately, 71% of these ESOL students are currently enrolled in elementary schools with 15% in middle schools and 14% in high schools. These figures corroborate national figures (NCLEA, 2007). Since over 3/4 of the ESOL population is still situated in elementary grades, people need praxis that will prepare all of such students to enter middle school, and later high-school and eventually go on to college. What this paper reiterates is that if most of the ESOL students are concentrated in elementary schools, praxis have to be developed and implemented, which ensure that skills for academic advancement—of which writing is central—are rigorously taught in early grades. This is especially crucial if people intend for the ESOL learners to be fully functioning participants in a highly literate democracy. As some writers have pointed out, “texts open up new possibilities for writers and their communities—just as illiteracy or ineffective writing can deny avenues for advancement” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 1). The visually rendered 6-step MAP model proposed in this essay is arguing for this very type of educational access for L2 populations: writing instruction for ESOL middle school students which is learner responsive, relevant and practical. This paper calls for a model of writing instruction with simultaneous short and long term outcomes for newcomer populations at the middle-school level and beyond.

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